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REFORMATION OF WOMEN—MODERN METHODS OF DEALING WITH OFFENDERS

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In looking over the programs of recent meetings of various bodies devoted to the study of social conditions in different parts of the United States, the consideration of the duty of the state toward the delinquent woman appears with increasing frequency. It signifies a change of attitude on the part of society toward the offender, and particularly toward the woman offender, which is most encouraging. It is not so long ago that the woman who sinned was considered so far out of the pale as to be unworthy of any consideration whatever. Any effort to do more than punish her when she broke the written laws of the community was considered a waste of time and money. With the growing recognition of social responsibility for the environment which reacts on character has come the realization of the duty of society toward those who are made what they are largely by society itself.

The problem of delinquent women is complicated as the problem of delinquent men is not, by social conditions and social conventions, and this will continue to be the case so long as society tolerates two standards of conduct for the two sexes. Lombroso has stated in his work on the "Female Offender" his opinion that the prostitute among women occupies a corresponding position to the criminal among men. This is in a great measure true. It is found in studying the histories of women in the state prisons, penitentiaries and similar institutions, that a large majority of them have been unchaste, have lived loose lives sexually, even if they have not been actually among the class of prostitutes who support themselves by their profession. As a result of this it is necessary in considering methods for reformation of women to make allowances for the feelings of the society into which the women must eventually be placed.

We recognize to-day that the woman offender is divided into two general classes. The first class includes those who are delin-

quent on account of some congenital defect—physical weakness, lack of will-power—if not of active criminal tendencies. This class includes various degrees of feeble-mindedness—of mental unbalance—between which and insanity it is difficult to draw a line. Often with lack of vitality she is unfit for difficult or continuous labor.

The second class includes those for whom environment is largely responsible—those who have failed through lack of moral, mental or physical training. For this class society is directly responsible. Crowded and unsanitary conditions in our cities, the lack of enforcement of city ordinances, the failure to enforce compulsory education laws, inefficient methods in our public school system, unjust economic conditions and the low moral standard among men which prevails in our cities, all of these are the things which are directly controlled by society and which are largely responsible for the making of the delinquent women who fall into this class.

Society is indirectly responsible for the first class. The burden has simply moved back a generation, and the children are what they are because the parents are what they are. Environment and heredity are so closely related that it is difficult to draw a line. Society is getting to recognize these facts, and is getting ready to shoulder its responsibility.

While twenty-two states out of the forty-seven states have so far met their duty as to establish under various names training schools for delinquent girls, but three states in the Union are fulfilling their obligation toward the women of the state. It is a truism to say that if the obligations to the boys and girls were all properly met there would be no need for the consideration of delinquent men and women. But do the best we may, it is likely to be many years before we can dismiss the latter class from our minds and hearts.

For centuries society has tried to cure wrongdoing by punishing the offender. That it has not been successful it is only necessary to turn to the records to be convinced. Education for the hopeful seems to be the only way out. If we are to be logical, there seems to be an undebatable course open to us. First, to afford the means of education and training to all delinquents. Those who have failed through lack of these will thus be enabled to return to society, self-respecting, self-supporting, law-abiding citizens. After proper study and effort, those who are too thoroughly dis-

eased to be cured must be isolated to prevent social contamination, just as we are getting to isolate the tubercular, and so prevent the spread of wrongdoing by contagion and by direct propagation.

Three states have in a measure recognized their obligation by establishing institutions where experiments are being made in this kind of work. In each of the three states—Massachusetts, Indiana and New York—the work accomplished has fallen far short of what it might be. States are slow-moving bodies, and it is not easy to so frame laws, plan experiments and secure the necessary money to carry them out as to realize ideals at once. But there is an advance being made, and the hopeful sign is that in a considerable number of other states agitation is active at this time to secure a change in the treatment of women offenders, and to establish educational institutions for their care. Massachusetts was the pioneer in this work, as it has been the pioneer in so much that is good. When the reformatory prison at Sherbourne opened, there was no other institution of this kind in the United States. Sherbourne showed the way, but has been handicapped by unfortunate changes in the law and by its antiquated type of building. Indiana reformatory prison for women has also accomplished pioneer work, but is located in a city on the congregate plan. New York, in establishing its reformatory institutions, has profited by the work of these two other states, and has located its schools in the country and has built upon the cottage plan.

There is every reason to believe that the states which are about to start upon this work will take advantage and profit by the mistakes of the other three states.

In establishing reformatories for women two points are fundamental—location in the country and building on the cottage plan. The first is desirable for reasons of health—for the possibility of varied industries and for opportunities for outdoor life and work. The second is necessary to enable a proper system of classification to be put into effect. We are getting more and more to believe in the healing and restorative effect of life in the country and in the open air. It is my personal conviction that growing emphasis will be laid on this side of the work, not only in institutions for men, but in those for women. Our own experience along various lines of outdoor occupations has convinced us of the practicability and desirability of this. Even if it is not possible to train women

for outdoor occupations and for country life as a means of livelihood, so much that is valuable in the way of training, to say nothing of conditions essential for the improvement of general health and nervous condition is to be gained, that there is little doubt of its value as a method.

The necessity of a system of classification is almost self-evident. Women offenders are not a homogeneous body. The accidental offender may be a woman of refinement, some education, decent ancestry and with a dislike for what is vile. It is a cruel thing to compel a woman of this class to daily association with the habitual offender, and to bring her in close contact with those whose thoughts are vile and whose language, when allowed free expression, degrading.

The younger women who are full of life and spirit can be best managed by a given method of discipline. Older women, with resources in themselves, get on best when placed by themselves. Neither age, character of the offense committed, nor social condition is a safe guide in classification. The ideal thing is the study of the individual, extending over some weeks, and then the classification based on character and needs. To carry out an ideal system of classification necessitates a somewhat expensive equipment. Schoolrooms, workrooms and play spaces should be kept separate. To secure such facilities it is necessary to persuade the state authorities that the result, and, hence the money value, of the returns will be proportionate to the expenditures.

Experience seems to prove that a large percentage of women offenders are women of little education and who need to be instructed in fundamentals. Their industrial efficiency is largely on a par with their literary attainments. The industrial training to be taught in a given institution must and ought to depend largely on local conditions and opportunities for employment after leaving the institution. It is obviously wasteful to instruct women in occupations for which they cannot be placed or in which it is unsafe to place them. In different states economic conditions vary, and this should be studied when planning the industrial work in a given reformatory.

In every institution for women much stress should be laid on their physical wellbeing. It is hopeless to try to reform a woman whose nervous system is demoralized or who has some pronounced

physical ailment which unfits her for continuous effort. Every such institution should possess a skillful woman physician, a trained nurse or nurses and a properly equipped hospital, large enough, not only to care for acute illness, but to afford a place where obscure cases can be studied with a view to determining how far delinquency comes from physical causes. For all physically unfit a proper amount of proper work in the open air is advisable, and open-air exercise and play should in all cases form a part of daily life.

In all such institutions religious instruction must be of a character to avoid any accusation of proselyting, but in my judgment reformatory work of any kind will fail unless the spiritual part of the individual can be aroused. The awakening of this spiritual life, and the direction of the energies along ethical lines, need not necessarily include any doctrinal teaching. The sensitiveness of some religious bodies as to what is vital is considerable, and it will probably be sometime before we are broad enough to make it unnecessary to hold distinctively denominational services, at least for Catholics, Protestants and Jews. It is not easy to find the right person to conduct such services, but they should exist in each community.

Beyond anything that can be accomplished by means of formal religious instruction of whatever sort is the influence of the lives of those in charge of these institutions. Too much cannot be said of this. The old anecdote of Mark Hopkins that he on one end of the log and a boy on the other would constitute a college, is pertinent to this point. More important than location or equipment is the character of the officers of an institution. No institution will succeed which fails to include on its staff a majority of men and women who are devoted to their work from other motives than that of merely earning a livelihood.

Not less important along modern reformatory lines is the principle of parole. The logical accompaniment of a proper parole system is a truly indeterminate sentence. So far as I know, no state has as yet been brave enough to attempt this. So soon as an inmate of an institution is able to go out in the world, and lead an honest, self-supporting life, he should be encouraged to do so, under the watchful care of the officers of the institution, and, knowing that failure to make good means the return to the institution, while success means a full discharge.

From my viewpoint the reform of the offender is only one phase of the large subject of the administration of justice. The making of just laws and their impartial enforcement, the sure and speedy consequences meted out to those who prove themselves incapable of social living, either by probation or by a term in a training school and the subsequent release on parole, and the inevitable corollary of permanent segregation of those who prove themselves socially unfit, all are parts of one whole. We cannot say that any one part is more important than the other. We each have our work along our special lines, but we each should be able to do that work better if we can come together and find out what each is doing, in order that co-operation may be both sympathetic and intelligent. Only in this way shall we finally secure the ends for which we are all working.